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Mr. THAYER's
S E R M O N,

AT THE
F U N E R A L

OF THE

Rev. Timothy Harrington.

MR. THOMAS R.
S E R M O N



OF THE
Rev. Timothy Harrison

S E R M O N,

PREACHED DECEMBER 23,

AT THE

F U N E R A L

OF THE

Rev. TIMOTHY HARRINGTON;

LATE

SENIOR MINISTER

OF THE

CHURCH IN LANCASTER;

WHO DIED

DECEMBER 18, 1795,

IN THE EIGHTIETH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

BY **NATHANIEL THAYER, A.M.** K

SURVIVING MINISTER OF SAID CHURCH.

AMHERST, NEWHAMPSHIRE,

FROM THE PRESS OF BIGLOW AND CUSHING.

MDCCXCVI.

To the Rev. NATHANIEL THAYER.

SIR,

THE subscribers, in behalf of the inhabitants of Lancaster, present you their thanks for the sermon delivered at the funeral of the Reverend TIMOTHY HARRINGTON, and request a copy for the press.

We are, Sir,

With respect and esteem,

Your obedient servants,

ASA WARNER,	} <i>Selectmen</i>	
MERRICK RICE,		<i>of</i>
OLIVER CARTER,		<i>Lancaster.</i>

January 22, 1796.



A
FUNERAL SERMON.

II. TIMOTHY, IV. 7, 8.

"I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT; I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE; I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

HENCEFORTH THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE SHALL GIVE ME AT THAT DAY; AND NOT TO ME ONLY, BUT UNTO ALL THEM ALSO, THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING."

IT was the comforting and happy privilege of Saint Paul, that he could contemplate the interesting concerns of time and of eternity, with increasing delight. A review of the active scenes, in which he had been engaged, since the commencement of his apostolic labors, did not depress, nor an anticipation of the future intimidate or discourage him. Having uninterruptedly sought the welfare of immortal souls, been true to his Master, and faithful to his God, he was now a stranger to the bitterness of reproach, and felt none of those forebodings, which conscious guilt will always originate.

This was the serene and joyful condition of the great apostle of the Gentiles, at a season, when he most needed comfort. Sensible, that he had now

traversed the spacious field of ministerial duty ; that the number of his days was almost complete ; that he was just on the confines of eternity ; and still cherishing a laudable anxiety for the cause, of which he had been a zealous defender, he in the chapter, which contains our text, introduces many wholesome charges for the benefit of his young disciple. To encourage him with diligence to pursue the path, in which his spiritual father had uniformly walked, he informs him of the refined comfort, which his own fidelity and persevering goodness now afforded. He was enabled thereby to look upon time with indifference, and into eternity with rapture ; for he had preserved “ a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards man.” “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love his appearing.”

Happy was our apostle, who could with perfect propriety utter these consoling sentiments. Happy indeed is that minister of Jesus Christ, who, at the close of his labors in the vineyard, can be equally certain of his fidelity, can with the like confidence look forward to the approbation of his Judge, and to an union with those pure and perfect spirits, who surround the throne of God.

9

The text contains a beautiful and pertinent description of the past life and future prospects of a faithful minister, and the language, in which he may with propriety express himself at the conclusion of his labors. These will for a short time employ our meditations, and the discourse will close with such reflections, as are suited to the present solemnity.

After a review of his life, the faithful minister may with propriety say, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

The employment of the christian ministry is necessarily attended by many difficulties and discouragements. It being a considerable part of their duty, to reprove the vicious, to reclaim the erroneous, and to conquer the passionate, the combat is always perplexing, and to secure success, it is required, that they be capable of "enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." To stimulate them to diligence, activity, and enterprise, they may avail themselves of the comforting reflection, that the contest, in which they are engaged, is truly honorable. To dethrone vice, and establish virtue, to subvert the empire of Satan, and to build up the kingdom of Christ, is a cause, which, at the same time that it requires valor to defend, has merit sufficient to encourage and animate all, who are disposed to engage. It presents an opportunity for the wise, to display the extent of

3
their wisdom ; the prudent, their skill ; the vigorous, their enterprise ; and to come off completely victorious, the united energy of these excellencies may very advantageously be exhibited.

Such then are the purposes of the conflict, that the faithful minister has no reason to be ashamed. If, when quitting the scene, he can recollect no instance, in which through pusillanimity or cowardice he has deserted his post ; if the frowns or the flatteries of the profligate have never persuaded him to deviate from the line of duty, this must in itself prove an inconceivable source of comfort. The object, for which he has striven, is no less than to promote the universal prevalence of virtuous principles ; the weapons, with which he has been arrayed, are derived from the gospel ; his commission given by his Master ; and to him may he confidently look for the reward of his services.

The course, marked out for the ministers of Jesus, appears to be exceedingly various. Some are continued capable of discharging the laborious duties of their office to a very advanced period. Others are cut off in the morning of existence, and in the beginning of usefulness. Their conditions in life are proportionably different. Whilst some are permitted to glide smoothly through the world, and to have their cares sweetened by pleasant occurrences, others are tossed on the ocean of trouble, and spend their days in perplexity. The reason of this diversity most probably is, that it

may serve for the trial of their graces. The history of the apostle Paul affords ample evidence of the very great advantage, produced by the various perils, to which he was exposed. They served to heighten the lustre of his character, and the apparent beauty of his religion. The difficulties, he had to surmount, were numerous. His task was exceedingly arduous. But upon a review of his life, with an undisturbed conscience, he could say, "I have finished my course." "I have been retarded by no obstacles, discouraged by no unfortunate adventures, but have proved myself strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Such are the reflections, and such is the happiness of the faithful minister. He enters upon duty with a mind prepared to discharge it. He engages in the vineyard with an expectation of enduring its toils, as well as of sharing its fruits. In pursuing his course, he has reason to expect pain; as well as pleasure. The arrival of the former does not alarm, nor the unexpected departure of the latter dispirit him. Sensible that his tour of duty is extensive, that to counsel; instruct; and exemplify form sufficient business for the longest life, he seizes the passing moment, and causes it to become memorable by some profitable exercise. Thus is his course finished, whenever it shall please the author of his being to interrupt it. Whether it prove long or short, by diligence and industry

the course may be run, and its attendant duties accomplished.

In reviewing his life, the faithful servant of Christ may also derive comfort from the reflection, that he has exerted his best abilities, to understand and preserve the christian faith.

The zeal, the intrepidity, and firmness of the first instructors of our religion are in nothing more strikingly proved, than in their uniform and persevering attachment to its doctrines. This is an evidence of fidelity, which can never be dispensed with. To preserve the christian doctrines uncorrupted, to study them with diligence, and defend them with earnestness are essential to the dignity of the ministerial character, and to the preservation of peace and serenity of mind in the closing scene of existence.

From a life, thus spent, must the christian minister, when his labors are finished, expect to derive his chief comfort. The joy, which this occasions, can only be equalled by the extent and brightness of his future prospects. But without a pleasing and undisturbed recollection of the past, the present will be but inquietude, and dreary will be his prospect of the coming world. Whereas, if he has been faithful to God, and to the souls of men, he may then with the apostle extend his views and express his joy in that transporting language, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge

shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love his appearing."

The approaching day of impartial and general retribution is a subject, which exercises the faith, and increases the hope of every sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. When earthly objects are losing their beauty, future realities appear with an increased excellence. The man of fidelity, of virtue, and of religion has now nothing to fear. The prospect of an equitable and impartial distinction of characters is the basis, upon which his future prospects are raised. Whilst he recollects his unvaried and persevering attachment to the injunctions of his Master, he with confidence relies upon him for his reward.

It is also an excellence in the situation of the true believer, that for the social dispositions, he has cultivated on earth, he can expect in heaven their highest possible gratification. Neither contracted in his views, nor selfish in his desires, he expects to meet the virtuous of all kindreds, nations, and tongues, and with them rapturously to contemplate the glories of the heavenly world. The rewards of grace he believes to be extended to all, who rightly estimate their privileges. This is a source of comfort to the pious man, which is inconceivably great. His brethren of the human family, however distinguished by birth or external advantages, he delights to behold progressing in virtue, and candidates for the same blessedness

with the most highly privileged of the christianised world.

Thus delightful is the recollection of the life, and thus glorious is the prospect of the faithful servant of our divine Master. Supported by the past, and animated by the future, he has in his own mind an inexhaustible source of happiness. Who then would not engage in the contest, run the race, and keep the faith, which lead to so much joy?

It was his having done thus, which, we have reason to believe, originated the patience, and consoled the mind of the faithful servant of Christ, whose remains we are this day to deposit in the grave. Not having been privileged by an intimacy with him, until his faculties both of body and mind were exceedingly enfeebled; having beheld only the ruins of this once magnificent fabric, it cannot be expected that from a personal knowledge of him I should be enabled rightly to estimate his merit. But having been uniformly treated by him with the affection and tenderness of a parent, I could not gratify my own feelings, nor do justice to his memory, without attempting a delineation of his character, for the imperfections of which, the reason just assigned must be received for an apology.

The Reverend Timothy Harrington was endued with intellectual faculties, which were calculated to render him agreeable, respectable, and use-

ful. These were early cultivated and improved. Enjoying the advantages of a good education, he was qualified for becoming an able and deserving "defender of the faith, which was once delivered to the saints."

In his disposition, an extraordinary degree of mildness, of affability, and benevolence was exhibited. He was calculated to become an agreeable and acceptable member of all circles, because he was the friend of all. In him was discovered a happy union of those qualities, which gratify in the man, which please in the gentleman, and which delight in the christian. He could so temper his gravity with cheerfulness, his decision with mildness, and his earnestness with moderation, that persons of both sexes and of every age esteemed, respected, and loved him. The child looked to him, as its father; the young, as their friend and conductor; the aged, as their companion and brother.

But the virtue, for which he shone conspicuous, and which will make his memory dear to every friend to real goodness, was charity. This never waxed cold. The poor were never sent empty away. Their wants he anticipated. Their most sanguine expectations he equalled. If there was any avenue for the admission of joy, he discovered it, and made their hearts to overflow with thankfulness. Whilst they could not recompence him, we trust, he became thereby a fair candidate.

“for being recompensed at the resurrection of the
 just.”

The various offices of friend, parent, and husband he filled with the sincerity, tenderness, and affection, which were calculated to make all, who in these different situations experienced his goodness, delighted and happy.

Liberal in his views and sentiments, he ever professed to entertain a rational and manly concern for the civil and religious rights of mankind. Attached to no system or laws, merely because they were privileged with the stamp of antiquity, he changed his opinions, for the sake of embracing truth, wherever or whenever it could be found. If at any time he has been supposed immoderate in his attachment to previously imbibed sentiments, candor will instruct us to attribute it rather to the firmness and integrity of his principles, than to any want of a desire to discover the proper means of conviction.

For his fidelity, diligence, and usefulness in discharging the duties of his office, as a minister of Jesus, he deserves no less to be remembered. Governed by what appeared to him the intimations of an allwise and overruling providence, he early engaged in this sacred employment. Of his public discourses it may with propriety be observed, that they exhibited ample proofs of the scholar and the divine. The purity, pertinency, and fervor of his addresses to the throne of grace,

all, who have united with him in this important part of the exercises of religion, have acknowledged and applauded.

In the year one thousand, seven hundred, and forty one he became regularly connected with the society of Christians in the lower *Assuclot, and sustained the office of their christian minister until the spring of one thousand, seven hundred, and forty seven, when by reason of the ravages of a furious and destructive enemy, he was separated from them. Being sincerely concerned for their spiritual interest, he waited a change of affairs, which should reunite this much beloved but scattered family. All exertions to effect this were fruitless. He then preached to other societies, wishing to exert his best abilities in promoting his Master's interests. Previously to his settlement in this place, which was in November one thousand, seven hundred, and forty eight, he obtained a testimonial from some of the members of his former society, which is left upon record, and which abundantly proves, how holy and unblameably he walked before them in the exercise of all the graces, which honor a christian minister. Although the connection between a minister and people, which, when rightly formed, is one of the tenderest in life, was dissolved, he still cared for them.

* This Town is in the State of Newhampshire, and, since Mr. Harrington left it, has received the name of Swanzy.

No distance of place or length of time could obliterate the remembrance of them, or cause him to be unmindful of their welfare. And it is worthy of being mentioned, as a striking evidence of the purity of his heart, of the warmth of his affection, of the extent of his charity, and the reality of his religion, that he has bequeathed a *small token of his love for them, to be expended in providing some of the furniture for the Lord's table:

His virtues by being placed in a more public situation, became more extensively known. Since he was connected with you, my brethren of this christian society, you are witnesses of his uniform fidelity and exemplariness. In public, he seasonably warned and instructed you. In private, he rejoiced to share in your joys, and was never more delighted, than when he could contribute to your comfort, by taking upon himself your burden of sorrows. In sickness he embraced every opportunity of refreshing your minds with the reviving cordials, which he received a commission from his master to administer. Indeed he was at all times your friend: When unable to serve you in his official capacity, he mentioned you with tenderness, and was always comforted by hearing, that you walked in the truth. In fine, apart from the infirmities, which are inseparable from human

* The sum was three pounds, six shillings, and eight pence, to be appropriated to the procuring of a silver cup.

He early evidenced his benevolence, by giving the people all the property, which he received, as the first minister of the town, and by relinquishing considerable sums of money, due for his past services.

weakness, we may with strict propriety observe, that he so discharged the various private, social, and ministerial duties, as to prove, that he was a truly upright man, and an accomplished christian.

A remembrance of these, his excellencies, although really a source of comfort, must call into exercise her sensibility, who now mourns the loss of a kind and affectionate husband. We sincerely wish her the consolations of the spirit of God ; recovery from her present illness ; serene and undisturbed enjoyment the remainder of her days ; and an union with her departed friend in the mansions of the blessed.

The children, who have enjoyed one of the most tender parents, will do well to remember, that virtue and religion were by him esteemed the only path to true honor and happiness. Let his instructions regulate you, and his example constantly charm you. Thus you will honor your father's memory ; prove, that the virtues, he cultivated, are inherited by you, and future generations will delight "to rise up, and call you also blessed."

Readily do I unite with the members of this religious society, in recollecting the amiableness, fidelity, circumspection, and diligence of your aged and venerable pastor, who is now dead. He was worthy of your warmest affection and most sincere love. But it is unnecessary to remind you of this. You have uniformly shown, that you justly estimated his merit. The attention and ten-

derness, he experienced, when unable to perform the duties of a minister, assisted in preserving his affection for you to his last hours. Your amiable and benevolent treatment of him, in connection with the respect, you are this day paying his memory, are contemplated by his friends with thankfulness, and have gained the approbation and applause of all, to whom the history thereof has been communicated.* But be intreated to remember, that, "although he is dead, he yet speaketh." Recollect his salutary counsels, his seasonable admonitions, his judicious instructions; and evidence to the world by your exemplary deportment, that you have profited by his labors. Thus shall we be enabled to rejoice together during our present connection, and you will shine, as the firmament, in the kingdom of our father.

My reverend fathers and brethren will permit me to remind them, that "we also must shortly put off these our earthly tabernacles." Neither firmness of constitution, agreeableness of prospects, or sacredness of employment will secure us an exemption from that event; which is common to all mankind. Within a few weeks, the unrelenting messenger of death has repeatedly summoned our fathers and brethren into the world of spirits. Scarcely had we heard the melancholy tidings of the departure of a brother,† "who was a burning

* Mr. Harrington preached but few times the last five years of his life. His salary was paid as formerly; and the funeral expences were defrayed by the inhabitants.

† The Rev. Hezekiah Hosper of Boylston, who died December 20, 1795, in the 26th year of his age, and 2d of his ministry.

and a shining light, and in whose light the people of his charge for a season willingly rejoiced," before we were admonished by the death of our respected father ; that we are born to die. Let us then attentively listen to these messages from heaven. Like our father and friend, whom we loved, let us be eminent in virtue, and patterns of piety, that we also may be comforted by reviewing our labors with approving minds, and have equal reason for expecting, that when "we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord."

The members of this numerous assembly are called upon, to remember the transitoriness of all temporal enjoyments. "The fashion of this world passeth away, and we are passing away with it." We little more than enter upon existence, and are flattered by the brilliancy of our prospects, than their beauty begins to fade, our capacity for relishing them ceases, and they with us are no more seen. Let us then be excited to fix our affections upon nobler and more permanent objects. Let us look to the consequences of our actions. Then, when we are called to leave our habitations in this lower world, "we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

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